

Symon letter 15

Private mail bag, Wynbring Siding SA, 29/9/43

I've been sending the Times and any Home papers I receive to "Spitfires" via Air Board Melbourne)

My dear Kilmeny

I have not been writing much for some weeks except business etc. letters. Just because like our sundials I have loved to gossip over the "sunny hours" of my life and Arthur Mee's death affected me greatly, all the more because up to July! I was receiving his dear friendly "lighthearted" letters (he died May 27). In the very last one I think he was anxious about my 'solitary life' and wanted me greatly to have a 'nurse companion' in my tent life and offering a sum of 3 figures for her maintenance!! And this offer to me was such a joke! That I fretted all the more because I could not explain my solitary tent and its "doing without"!! and asking him if he could capture an 'angel' no rest, no meat, no comfort etc etc. I otherwise, if I paid £50 a week no super nurse would remain a day in such "doing without". Some day, if I should see Adelaide again and again give myself 'pleasure and profit' by meeting Kilmeny and noting her beautiful poise in the impossible world of today. My "barging in" upon you at Thrift-Depôt was mainly to gather strength and courage. When I think of you at night, you bring just the right kind of love and hope and strength to me that I need. I miss my kind here in this solitude. I cannot take the natives back until they are 'clean inside'...

This year has been a dry one in this area and my lovely little flower friends, the parakylia, are not showing up round my tree, almost like a 'cultures bed' of flowers they were. I found a few plants and brought them to my tree, but they are not yet at home' there. Have you ever studied Hylogism? A man named Hudson was a Hylogoist (Hylozoist) and I to read him up if I am in Adelaide again. I am sure the Public Library has his books. "A Shepherd's life" is me I think. I am a hylogoist as far as birds are concerned. My little wren families and I understand each other quite well! They 'roost' in my breakwind every evening and just when I'm having my evening bath, their little good night trill comes along and I trill back, and so they say to each other, "She is still here and that's all right" and in the morning a little note will come "Are you awake? And I answer with the same little note and they have to wait till I'm dressed and they chatter away to each other. It is not the language, it is the tone and the sound and the feeling that little "comradey trill" is my greatest joy to hear.

I cannot tell you how much I value the Times you send me. They fill every sense within me of love and pride and thankfulness for our Great Empire and what it has done, is doing and will do. For all mankind, God save England and the Empire and save Australia for the Empire (and so for Australia's own happiness.) To think of that little island saving America and the whole world, in what is called its "Battle of Britain". The Poise of our beloved England from 'Cockney' to 'Royalty!'

I corresponded frequently with Arthur Mee as he used to send Airgrams and Airletters (with 5/- stamps on them!) almost weekly at times and his last letters were accompanied by his last book "Wonderful year" received in July" but sent in the beginning of May.

On its flyleaf he wrote 'This to Beloved Daisy Bates, Ambassador of the Flag and the Kingdom, Peace be unto her. Arthur mee.

Spring Day, 1943 – In it, in a chapter headed “The Truth, Mr Wilkie”, Arthur Mee ‘pits’ me against Wilkie whom he apparently disapproved of in regard to the Empire. I shall send it to you by this mail to read, but I should like to have it by me just to’ hear’ Arthur Mee say his thoughts to his beloved England. He wanted to send me all his Kings [of/] England Books (38 or so I think) each book of an English county! Then he wanted to send me the Children’s Encyclopedia , then a ‘radio’ that I could bring England to my camp at will! And so on and so I always had to dwell upon the size of my tent and my having no room even for an extra “tea cup”. I had to put things to him in this funny way but it is quite true. I can’t have an extra pen, because I must have everything ‘in its place’ and nowhere else, and then I can place my hand in the dark on anything I need and I don’t mind the “clutteredupness” of my table. And so I jested with dear Arthur Mee, and he died without realizing the reality. In the little Children’s Newspapers that have come since his lovely editorship closed, the new Editors are receiving many of my old frank letters to him and are making extracts from these and are publishing them. Arthur Mee had a fine sense of what to publish (and always paid the fee) from those letters and never in all the years made a mistake in that respect. Strange minds, now receiving those letters, make me anxious. I’ve written to the Editors’ office explaining that much of my correspondence with Arthur Mee was with a friend to whom I sat and wrote my thoughts and so on.

Now I must stop, but it is such a joy to me to see your dear face before me in that little book room of Thrift. I am enclosing a small cheque for your America project and do hope the venture brings you success. Did you meet Mrs Roosevelt? I did not know of her visit till last week (today is 29 Sep.) and she had come and gone. My papers Sat Mail and Advertiser (Adelaide) are a week or fortnight old. My SM Herald nearly always a fortnight late and my Western Mail W.A. ditto. God bless you dear Kilmeny. You cannot realize how pleasant and sweet you are in my memory.

Affectionately Daisy M. Bates